

[sent September 8, 2020]

Hello board,

During our August 6 meeting between the volunteer BoD and the office, I told you I would provide additional information about my own personal experiences with PB that supported the experiences shared by the rest of the employees. I never did that, primarily because I ended up focusing instead on documentation for the mediation sessions between PB & myself, and because I didn't want to interfere in the official HR process (though Jasmin did encourage and welcome me to contact you all directly despite my hesitation). So, I apologize that this has taken me so long to put together. Please find below some supplementary information that may be relevant to your process. I am happy to answer any questions about my experiences.

After a lot of thought, I decided this information was worth sending even after two mediation sessions with PB. I was pretty unhappy with the outcome of our first session, so I requested a second session to try to address some "meta-issues" that I felt in how he approached the conversation (that is, I wanted to discuss the logical underpinnings of his statements and his characterization of the issues at hand rather than any specific incidents). To his credit, I did see a change in PB's attitude at our second session; I imagine this is due in large part to the messages of the other employees during their mediation sessions, all of which took place between my first and second sessions. Nonetheless, I still have grave misgivings about his suitability for the Executive Director role.

I feel it's important to state that I did not have these misgivings at the start of his employment, nor did I share them with anyone until other employees began approaching me about his behavior. The office actively participated in the hiring process and enthusiastically supported the board's decision to extend an offer to him. I feel that I did everything reasonably within my power to support PB and set him up for success. It was his own performance and behavior that gradually eroded our trust and working relationships. It's absolutely possible to do great work when one is still learning the ropes; I have seen each of the other employees do exactly this. But as a direct result of his own insecurity and defensiveness, PB alienated many people that an experienced leader should have recognized and worked to cultivate, and he widened and exacerbated the gap between the office employees and the board--the maintenance of which is one of his main responsibilities.

I sort of suspect that the feelings shared by the employees largely came as a surprise to the board. I would venture a quotation from one of my favorite fictional characters: "If you want to know what a man's like, take a good look at how he treats his inferiors, not his equals." I strongly believe that six talented, experienced professionals (who are widely respected by our community and generally considered reasonable and pleasant to work with) are probably not mistaken in our negative assessment of his management skills, his emotional skills, and his cultural fit. I strongly believe MAGFest does not have the resources or capacity to train him, whether

upwards from the employees or downwards from the board. And I strongly believe that we may lose other employees who are proven veterans (and in whom we have, individually and collectively, invested considerably more energy & resources) if there is not a reversal in the course of action soon.

Thank you, each of you, for all your time and attention to this issue.

Sincerely,
Debra

Mediation #1 Documentation

This is copied from the document I prepared for my first mediation session with PB, much of which was read verbatim. I'm including it here because it references (in shorthand) multiple incidents that make up the additional information that I would like to share with the board. I've included some of these incidents in greater detail below, but not all of them in the interest of keeping some semblance of brevity/focus--again, please let me know if you want more information on any of these concerns.

I do not feel comfortable in a working environment where...

- My supervisor reacts to perceived criticism with anger, personal attacks, and/or deflection.
 - Sprint planning 1 with Evelynnn (catalyst: me asking him to keep shared work in shared channels)
 - Phone call with Emily (catalyst: me disagreeing in a contagioncy meeting)
 - #burnout-discussions (catalyst: Shir critiquing a form he created)
 - Office feelings meeting (catalyst: Dac & me sharing our feelings in a "safe," planned group session)
 - Office furlough meeting (catalyst: Ev & Faith advocating for me to be kept on longer)
- My supervisor does not take accountability for bad behavior on his own.
 - #burnout-discussions (asked to apologize by Faith)
 - Office feelings meeting (organized by Matt & Emily)
 - #only_employees discussion (never followed up)
- My supervisor's expectations for my work are unclear, but I am subject to censure, sometimes in front of other employees.
 - Sprint planning 1 with Evelynnn (comments about me not delivering pivot timeline documentation on time)
 - Phone call with Emily (comments about me not supporting MAGMeet, MAGtv)
 - #burnout-discussions (comments about me/the office not giving him feedback on the form and not supporting him in the thread)
 - Fireside chat 2 DM (comments about my notes being late twice and insufficient)
- My supervisor backpedals or tells me conflicting information about his actions when confronted about a controversial statement or decision.
 - Apology after sprint planning 2 DM (after I let him know I would be taking further concerns to Jasmin)
 - Josiah/Shir onboarding (in the same phone call, leading with "I had already fought the board that day and couldn't fight for this because I need to pick my battles" and later, after Faith, Emily, & I shared why it was surprising and uncomfortable to us, said "That's why I advocated for onboarding them earlier, but I couldn't convince the board.") (these aren't verbatim quotes, sorry; they are from my memory since it was a phone call)

- Fireside chat 2 DM (“my previous message was only meant to clarify my expectations, not to imply that you were underperforming”)
 - #only_employees discussion (“I’m not saying not to dissent”)
- I am discouraged from speaking my mind, particularly to the board or in front of the board, but also in front of other employees.
 - Phone call with Emily (ex: “going behind my back to the board”)
 - DM after sprint planning 2 (ex: critiquing his idea in front of Evelyn; saying I disagreed with him in front of Emily; talking to Jack and Joel one-on-one about work-related topics)
 - #only_employees discussion (ex: saying that we were “fighting,” “drawing a line in the sand,” “calling them out” re: the board)
- My supervisor takes credit for the work of others.
 - Office furlough meeting
 - “Discovery” of Warhorn
 - Meeting agendas that call out documents as “Paul’s document” where they are a group product or even where he was not involved, and that fail to do the same for others
- My supervisor blames others for his mistakes or difficulties.
 - Everything to do with MAGMeet
 - “Emily made an oopsie”
 - Triforce meeting during #burnout-discussions
 - Heavy emphasis on finance committee “swaying” the board towards the latest furlough changes, even though the board was already leaning towards that decision.
- I see the professional opinions of myself and others get disregarded.
 - Situation between Dac and a staffer
 - MAGtv organization/kickoff
 - Burnout survey which resulted in #burnout-discussions
 - Time spent with board vs. with employees/staff
 - Hotel negotiation meeting
- My work is trivialized.
 - Office furlough meeting
- My supervisor regularly states or implies that our jobs are on the line.
 - Situation between Dac and a staffer
 - Phone call with Emily

- #only_employees discussion
- My supervisor indicates that his own personal needs are more important than the organization's or the rest of the employees.
 - Repeated statements about the board holding his job in their hands
 - Refusal to consider reduced salaries for all employees because it would not work for him personally (I DO understand that people have different life needs, and in fairness, once it came up in the office furlough meeting and was supported by multiple people, it was worked into the plan. However, it did not inspire confidence in me to have the whole idea scrapped initially.)

2020-04-22 sprint planning 1 with Evelynnn (COVID document disagreement)

- I don't have documentation of this, but Evelynnn might be able to corroborate if she remembers.
- PB mentioned during sprint planning that he was working on a COVID pivot document with Emily. I was slightly frustrated because I had an existing sprint task to work on a COVID pivot document and I was unaware they were also working on something separately, so I asked him if he could please keep that stuff in our shared triforme channel so we could stay on the same page and not duplicate our efforts. His response was that it had been several weeks and he hadn't seen anything from me, that he was afraid we wouldn't have anything to show the board, and that me asking him to share their document in our channel was a double standard when I refused to share my own work. I tried to explain that my concern wasn't about the work itself (they turned out to be very different docs!) but the *knowledge* that the work was being done--he & Emily knew I was working on a COVID-related document, but I had no way of knowing they were doing the same since it was being worked on in DM. He insisted that my expectations were hypocritical and unfair.
- I felt frustrated that instead of talking to me directly about concerns that he hadn't seen progress from me yet, he went around me to create something of his own.
- Moreover, I felt extremely embarrassed to have my performance called out in front of Evelynnn without warning (he wasn't wrong, I hadn't completed the work).
- Overall, this felt like a personal attack in response to what I felt was a reasonable request (both in content and tone) for greater transparency and teamwork.

2020-04-28 phone call with Emily (post-standup convo about contagioncy disagreement)

- I don't have documentation of this, but Emily might be able to corroborate if she remembers.
- The morning after one of our first contagioncy meetings, PB asked Emily & me via Slack if we could stay on after standup "to go over some things from last night." Emily had previously asked to take a mental health day that day, so she didn't show up at standup, so only PB & I were on the call at first. Emily then saw the Slack message after standup and joined the call about 10 minutes in--something I was completely unaware of because I had joined via phone instead of via Google Meet. Instead of pausing or redirecting the conversation as soon as she entered, PB continued discussing areas of my performance he was unhappy with.
- I don't remember everything we discussed because the conversation was long and heated, but essentially he was unhappy that I had disagreed with him publicly at the contagioncy meeting the night before (he had said he wanted to cancel West immediately so that we could announce the cancellation by MAGCon, and I had said that I didn't think either the cancellation or the announcement were urgent). He said that we needed to be on the same page before going into meetings, especially in front of the board.
- I told him that I was completely surprised to hear this--the two-sentence exchange had not even registered as a disagreement in my head. I said that my comments at the meeting were simply me expressing my professional opinion. I also pointed out that I had previously never heard him suggest we needed to cancel West immediately so we could announce by MAGCon, or I would have given him my opinion then.
- I said something as part of this conversation that he continues to misquote me on. I said something like "Disagreement is a normal part of business conversations in my mind. Of course I would do things differently than you if I were in your position; we are different people, *and that's ok.*" He quotes me as saying "I just disagree with everything you are doing and I would do everything differently." There's no record and the exact wording probably doesn't matter, but overall, I remember taking pains to express that disagreement does not equal disrespect, and his only takeaway (one that has persisted through all our mediation sessions) was that I was being disrespectful by saying this in front of another employee--one I *did not even know* was present in the call.
- The conversation turned into a list of concerns that he had about my behavior, primarily centered on me being "disrespectful" and "unsupportive." In addition to the disagreement during contagioncy, he mentioned the following concerns:
 - Our disagreement during sprint planning in front of Evelyn (described above).
 - The fact that I had been preparing a document "behind his back" to be shared with the board that indicated the Executive Director should be the first one to go on furlough. This was a result of me sharing my in-progress COVID doc with him & Emily after the sprint planning disagreement, which listed all the employees as candidates for furlough, and actually listed the ED last, not first.

- The fact that I had not provided enough support to him when he asked me for guidance on how to move forward with MAGtv. I had told him in a previous meeting that I frankly didn't know anything more about streaming than he probably did, but that my recommendation was to get Cody and Dac in a room to discuss their plans & expectations, and work from there to synthesize a structure and define roles. It was news to me that this was not enough guidance.
- The fact that I had not shown up to any MAGMeet games. It was news to me that he expected me to participate in MAGMeet, since it had never been brought up either inside or outside of the context of work plans and sprint planning.
- The fact that I hadn't responded to a poll he had posted in #employees the day before asking our availability for an office game night. I was unavailable at all times suggested, though I hadn't responded saying as much at that point.
- When I mentioned that I had no idea he had those expectations for me regarding MAGtv and MAGMeet, he responded "As Events Director in a year where we don't have events, I would have expected you to show more interest in our virtual initiatives." I told him I found this unfair and threatening, and while I did not take it as a threat, it was an example of something I'd previously discussed with him when the Dac/Jessica situation arose (that when you're the boss, you need to be extremely careful with your language around people's performance and positions, and that Nick had learned this lesson the hard way).
- At this point he backed off and said he had not intended his statements to be threatening or a comment on my performance. He said I was his most trusted employee, and added "along with you Emily, please don't take that the wrong way," alerting me to the first time of her presence in the call.
- I was extremely uncomfortable to learn that Emily was on the call and that he had not only not said anything about her presence, but continued criticizing my performance in front of her.

2020-05-12 DM after sprint planning 2

Paul Birtel

Details

Today



Paul Birtel 3:52 PM

Hey I am a little concerned about what you said during that meeting. Again I feel like you are pushing me to be more transparent and public with my meetings and conversations but at the same time inform me that you are having offline conversations about my initiatives that you don't fully understand and then inform me of those convos at a later date during unrelated meetings. I feel like you are demanding that I include you in on everything I am doing but feel perfectly fine keeping me in the dark when discussing my projects with other volunteers and staff. We should be having these talks one on one or at triforce meetings to make sure we have each others back, these revelations shouldn't be popping up in unrelated meetings as this is now the second time this has happened in front of Evelyn.



Debra Lenik 4:04 PM

I didn't bring it up with Jack last night; he brought it up while we were discussing MAGCon stuff which he asked me about after the meeting.

I don't feel like I was keeping you in the dark about it. what I said to you just now when you brought it up is the same thing I said to him when he mentioned it. that conversation happened less than 16 hours ago.

even if I hadn't talked to him about it last night, I would have organically given you the same opinion when you brought it up in the meeting today.

my thoughts on managing BoD agenda items in Jira pre-date that conversation as I brought them up to Evelyn last time she and I met to discuss BoD task tracking.

I didn't bring up the pre-BoD-meeting meetings while we were talking with Evelyn; you did when I mentioned I wanted to track agenda items better.

to say that I informed you that I was having offline conversations about your initiatives that I don't fully understand and then informed you of those convos at a later date during unrelated meetings feels like a pretty unfair way of framing what, to me, was me having an informal conversation with Jack in which he described those initiatives to me and then mentioning it later when a similar topic arose.

I didn't consider that conversation to be especially loaded/didn't notice an issue until you brought this up here.

it feels difficult for me to interpret when me stating my opinion on a subject is going to be an issue for you.

I am happy to bring stuff up in triforce meetings with Emily but that wouldn't even have been something on my radar to bring up because it didn't feel like a controversial opinion.



Paul Birtel 4:47 PM

Debra I am constantly feeling like I need to play by your rules and those rules are constantly changing. You and Joel spring a meeting on me stressing the importance that I avoid offline one on ones with Jack and that my opinion carries a lot of weight (which shows offline convos about me were being had with Joel), then you have an offline meeting with Jack sharing your opinion with him on my initiative that you never shared with me before. And then in this meeting with Evelyn you stress that my meetings need to be on shared calendar that all the office and committees have access too, it was the same scenario when you were demanding that the burn rate scenario I was working on with Em should be made public while you worked privately on your contingency plan recommendations for weeks with no one else weighing in, and just like today you confronted me with that double standard in front of Evelyn again. I also recall very vividly you claiming in front of Emily that everything I am doing you would do the opposite. I find these examples very disrespectful and I notice that you very often lecture people including myself and others at meetings that you find their statements false or destructive or unwarranted causing tension and conflict and hurting relationships between the groups I am trying to bring together. Then you say things just as destructive or unwarranted and justify it and avoid taking any accountability for them. If you want everything that others do to be more transparent then you need to be more transparent. If you want others to be more careful considerate of others when they share their opinions than you need to do the same. I want you as my ally but I feel like you are quick to oppose me and that is alright but that needs to start being more private or in the triforce because it is very important to me that we are a united front and and if we aren't we need to hash that out immediately and in a respectful offline way. Also stop sharing our private one on one messages in public channels without my permission. I don't want more excuses or justifications about what you deem is fair over slack chat. If you want to discuss any of this further schedule a one on one meeting with me.

- This conversation arose after a sprint planning where he brought up the TF2 meetings (pre-board meeting meetings to figure out the agendas with committee members). I commented something that I thought was innocuous, like “oh yeah, Jack mentioned that last night, I just cautioned him to be mindful of people’s time since we literally just spent an hour at the last board meeting talking about how we have too many meetings.” As with the previous example, I genuinely didn’t think it was a big deal to share feedback on that topic or in that way.
- The meeting with Joel that he referenced is also completely mischaracterized. It was a meeting between Joel & PB that Joel invited me to at the last minute. I had a previous commitment so I was actually 15 minutes late to that meeting. I did not “spring it” on him nor have any offline conversations about him with Joel.
- I also think the comment about “sharing private one on one messages in public channels without permission” is a mischaracterization. I will pull up examples if needed, but this has never involved sensitive information, only questions or

discussions that involve people outside myself (primarily Emily and our triform channel). I think every employee can probably attest to the fact that I make this a widespread habit in order to foster greater transparency and awareness with relevant people, and I always preface it by saying “I’m going to copy this into x channel so that other people can weigh in.” I felt he made it out to be a widely publicized public shaming, which feels unfair to me.

- I told him I would contact Jasmin and copy him so we could further discuss our concerns. The following weekend was MAGCon, and he sent me a DM during the presentations saying I had done a great job with MAGCon and apologizing for coming down on me so hard in his previous message, so I left it at that.

2020-07-16 #only_employees discussion

#only_employees ★

8 | Oops! all employees. Now with logistical rocket launch planning

 Details



Paul Birtel 2:05 PM

Today ▾

Next steps after office contingency meeting:

1. Emily to schedule a few standing meeting times for us to gather and discuss.
2. Ev to develop a way to develop a game plan of required work and staff during hibernation at those meetings.
3. Paul to add new burn rate calendar scenarios with suggestions from those meeting(s).
4. We then send scenarios to FTF to review and approve feasibility by 7/23.
5. Approved scenarios shown at Contagioncy meeting on 7/26. Contagioncy committee makes recommendation to the board.
6. BoD meets on 7/29 to make official vote on go or no go for super AND which scenario **we should** execute.

Did I miss anything?



evelynn oberheitmann 2:11 PM

i dont think so! i will be focusing on workplans as if super is virtual btw

we've already kinda lost a lot of planning time for virtual super so i wanna focus on that if possible



Paul Birtel 2:20 PM

Also thank you for the meeting everyone, I have to admit that took a lot out of me so I may need to unplug the rest of the day. I do want to remind everyone that most of the changes and strategies in that furlough calendar were based on employee suggestions prior to the meeting and with new suggestions we can edit it more but please consider something. Scenario 1 where we did not have a digital Super or a live West in 2021 was an attractive option to the BoD because it didn't involve taking on loans which is what most of the BoD are against. The BoD's priority is the survival of the org and they feel a loan would jeopardize that and the BoD members themselves would be the ones taking on the risks for that loan. I put in a lot of work these past few weeks to make them agreeable to scenario 2 and 3 and if we change those drastically I am nervous that scenario 1 might be where they land on the 29th. The reason I say that is I won't have as many weeks to sway them or sell them on our new suggestions, even with Josiah and Shir there they wouldn't get a vote and by drawing lines in the sand and fighting with the board it's hurting my ability to influence them toward what we want as an office. Please remember this is their choice, I know that can be frustrating but please help me build their trust in us and our suggestions as I am afraid if we keep going after them and pushing them they will get defensive and my influence will shrink. It's not easy being the middle guy especially with tensions this high, but please have faith in me even if you don't have faith in the BoD as I promise to take care of all of you and to be as fair as possible.

 1 



1 reply Today at 2:28 PM

Thread

only_employees



suggestions as I am afraid if we keep going after them and pushing them they will get defensive and my influence will shrink. It's not easy being the middle guy especially with tensions this high, but please have faith in me even if you don't have faith in the BoD as I promise to take care of all of you and to be as fair as possible.



3 replies



evelynn oberheitmann 7 hours ago

i can appreciate how hard this has been, so thank you for spending that time with us today! it is super uncomfortable and i'm sure you, deb, and em are all feeling worn down over it. ❤️❤️❤️❤️

i am glad that you are able to share the BoD priorities with us, it's helpful even if it's not always easy to hear. i hope the BoD takes the offices considerations to heart as much as you do theirs, as we all are working towards the same end (MAGfest thrivin & survivin). 🙌



Faith Savill 6 hours ago

hey, I really appreciate having the meeting today too and for everyone's honesty and thoughtfulness around some really tough topics. I do want to note that my emailing the BoD about Shir and Josiah is not drawing a line in the sand or fighting. It's my right as a member of the community to make my opinion known, and furthermore it's my job to represent the staff. I am happy to discuss anything with anyone on the BoD. It's possible they envision it as fighting, but I would appreciate it if it were not portrayed as such.

As I said about the Josiah/Shir issue, I know many of the decisions are not in my control, but I will continue to speak up if I feel something is an issue. I apologize if that makes your job harder, but I will always be respectful in my communications with the BoD (and like hopefully, with everyone). (edited)



Paul Birtel 6 hours ago

To be clear I wasn't asking anyone to not communicate with the board or not to speak their mind. Im just pointing out that the BoD puts immense trust in us so it's hard to maintain that if we constantly infer that we don't trust them. It's about relationships and we are all on the same team and we all deserve respect.

only_employees ★

8 | Oops! all employees. Now with logistical rocket launch planning

 Details

board it's hurting my ability to influence them toward what we want as an office. Please Today this is their choice, I know that can be frustrating but please help me build their trust in us and our suggestions as I am afraid if we keep going after them and pushing them they will get defensive and my influence will shrink. It's not easy being the middle guy especially with tensions this high, but please have faith in me even if you don't have faith in the BoD as I promise to take care of all of you and to be as fair as possible.

 1 



3 replies Last reply today at 3:27 PM



Debra Lenik 3:42 PM

hey--I'm sorry to continue being a thorn, but I don't feel that keeping this stuff in the #only_employees channel will further the goal of building bridges between the office and the board. I honestly think most of the board members would probably be willing to hear our thoughts directly. I mean, in some respects with a decision this big, you shouldn't *have* to be the middle guy, and it doesn't feel like that's to the benefit of any party right now based on what you just said.

I hear what you're saying about stirring up stuff with the board making them more resistant to hearing us. that said, I don't believe we are fighting, and again, I believe it does a disservice to all parties to treat it as such. as employees, we are literally paid to provide our professional expertise, and we would not be doing our jobs properly if we didn't speak up about things that we genuinely thought would be harmful to the organization. in other words, *it is the opposite of disrespectful for us to voice our concerns*. I am deeply uncomfortable with the implication that we will lose influence over major decisions affecting the future of the organization unless we stop dissenting. I don't know if that's accurate or if that's just your impression, but either way, it feels very silencing at a time when employee & staff input should be centered precisely *because* we are not the ones with the power to make the decision.

of course I have often had frustrations with the board as a group, but as individuals I like and respect them and I would like to trust that they are capable of hearing the intent and the wisdom behind our comments, *even if they end up disagreeing*.

I want to briefly add that I don't think the suggestions people are putting forth would necessarily mean drastic changes to scenario 2 or 3. I am personally not advocating for spending more money, but rather in spending money more strategically. I don't think this is something the board should object to as they have generally been very respectful about deferring to the office when it comes to office workplans and priorities. to say that any major changes to those plans would cause them to choose the nuclear option makes me extremely nervous. again, I don't know if that's something they've said explicitly or if that's just your impression, but it makes me feel that it is even more important for us to be in the room/able to give input directly.



Debra Lenik 3:53 PM

(sorry to drop a bunch of text and dip--I am about to head out on those afternoon errands, but will be back online later tonight)

 3 

Thread

only_employees



Paul Birtel Jul 16th at 5:12 PM

Like I said im NOT saying not to dissent or voice your concerns and I find it inflammatory to keep suggesting that. The board has now been sent three emails from the office including all employees that strongly insinuate that without Josiah and Shir that the board will make a bad decision. The board has already given its answer on the topic and yet we continue to call them out and disagree. Also to call option one the "nuclear option" is also inflammatory. Taking a loan, running a digital super or an in person west both if which running at a deficit in a year with no revenue is fiscally irresponsible, and to call out "leadership" (who would be legally on the line for the debt) for thinking otherwise is unfair. Honestly I represent the office to the board during board meetings, and I represent the board to all of you in our meetings, and it's my job to play middle man, and im doing a pretty good job of it considering the changes I have successfully made that weren't possible before because of the mistrust between the groups. We can inform, and dissent, and advise as paid professionals but the reality is the only legal members of MAGFest is the board, and they are our boss, and this is a professional organization. I am sorry if I sound frustrated but I am, these people hold our organization and our jobs in their hands and they are good people. So when my team constantly reminds them they don't trust them you are also saying you don't trust me which is very unfair considering the amount of sacrifices and fights I conduct for our team to push for the decisions you want. Have these convos on the board/office channel, email the board with frustrations, do what you feel is right and I will support you because I trust you. Im just begging you to trust me as this is my professional expertise and my role in the org. I will go to bat with whatever we decide just please give me the best chance to achieve it.

1 reply



Faith Savill 5 days ago

hey - sorry this is late - I wrote it earlier and then the whole day got away from me, so truly, no rush for anyone to respond:

As the person who sent 2/3 of the recent emails to the BoD, I would like to know where I insinuated a bad decision would be made. If the BoD feels that way, I'm happy to clarify, as that is not my intention. I'm also happy to continue in #bod-and-office so this doesn't have to just be in the employees-only channel. My argument is purely for Shir/Josiah to have a seat at the table for conversation - I realize a vote is not possible with the current processes. I personally think Shir and Josiah are likely to agree with the board re: an event cancellation. My point is that they deserve to represent the staffers who voted for them at that conversation. I do not think Josiah and Shir's presence would change a vote - it's the principle of it, not the end result, that matters to me (and I imagine, matters to staffers). I cannot find anything in my emails that implies the BoD would make a bad decision without them (because I think the decision would be the same), and I cannot find anything that implies I do not trust the BoD (or you, by extension).

TBH though, it does give me concern that you would use terms like 'fiscally irresponsible' and 'inflammatory' when as far as I could tell (and, I could just be a bad judge of feelings here and y'all can call me out if so), I found our meeting on Thurs to be civil and semi-productive, and neither of these terms were used in-person. I admit that the meeting probably brought up more questions than it answered as well as anxiety - understandable in our current very-unpredictable-situation.

As far as mistrust goes - I am still new here too, and I don't mistrust the BoD. Those on the BoD who have spoken to me at any length have been friendly and receptive. While it is part of your job description to liaise between the BoD and employees, it is certainly not illegal (and in the name of transparency, should not be discouraged) for me to speak my mind for myself or on behalf of our volunteers. I realize you say above that you are "NOT saying not to dissent or voice your concerns" but then you also express frustration that we (which is, let's be real, mostly me) "continue to call them out and disagree". I see no issue with disagreeing. I 100% respect that their choice might still be the same after listening to me. Trust me when I say I know and understand the board's power over our employment, and my resolve to speak up remains the same.

Mediation #2 Documentation

This is copied from the document I prepared for my second mediation session with PB, again much of which was read verbatim. I didn't finish it before our meeting, so it trails off a bit at the end, sorry!

I requested a second mediation session because, upon reviewing my notes and reflecting further on our first session, I still felt uncomfortable with the fact that we had not come to resolution on some of the major issues that affect our professional relationship. I spoke about these concerns with Jasmin in a follow-up meeting that same week and she supported me in requesting a second session.

I really took to heart your comment about me not being willing/able to change my own behavior. So, I examined your concerns in this lens to see where I could take accountability for things that I personally had done that contributed to damaging our relationship. Upon doing so, I could see some areas where I can take accountability and improve my behavior:

- I can make a greater effort to publicly support you and the board. (It is important that I understand the nuances of the decision or discussion before I can speak up, though.)
- I can make a greater effort to clarify my opinions in writing and revisit them frequently with you at one-on-ones or in triforce meetings so you are not caught off-guard by what seems like changes in my opinions when topics evolve during meetings.
- I can make a greater effort to choose my battles with the board, and to allow you to take more ownership of discussions with them.
- I can take greater care with my language and tone to ensure I do not come off as abrasive or confrontational when I am trying to express a professional opinion.
- I want to apologize for times that I myself have been hyperbolic or overly sensitive when describing my concerns. For example, in our first session, I should not have continued to pick at relatively small details like the amount of money set aside for a January event, or the exact words you used to describe the board's sentiments about furlough scenarios, or the statement about September fundraising.

NOTE: the following shouldn't be taken as direct quotes as I was typing notes and not recording the conversation during our first mediation, but I believe they are pretty close to verbatim things that my supervisor said.

At the same time, the concerns you brought up included multiple broad statements that were hyperbolic and unsupported by examples. This is a serious concern for me because if statements like this are being shared with HR or with the board, I fear they are getting a distorted or inaccurate view of my behavior and performance. It is absolutely possible that examples of these concerns

exist, but I would like to hear them from you so that I know what exactly I need to improve upon so that my behavior does not come off this way in the future.

- That I engage in “public displays of insubordination” which encourages other employees to do the same.
- That I request to be part of meetings that don’t include me & aren’t in the purview of the events director, and that I “lash out” at you and the board when the answer is no.
- That, if you make a decision that I don’t agree with, I will continue to bring it up or go above your head or try to overturn your decision, and that if that doesn’t work, I will work with other employees and volunteers to generate support against the decision.
- That several volunteers have reported that I keep them out of the loop, ignore them, lash out at them, or work with others to undermine them.
- That I reward supporters with “constant public praise and preferable treatment.”
- That I “refuse to work professionally with all volunteers,” and instead only work with the ones I like or support.
- That volunteers have skipped me in the chain of command to complain about my behavior or lack of response.

I also felt that you attributed outcomes to my behavior that were unfair or that were big logical leaps. This was frequently intertwined with (what I felt to be) overly broad or hyperbolic language about the board. Since they were secondhand accounts of my behavior and/or of other people’s feelings, I can’t tell if these situations occurred truly just as you described, or whether they were your interpretation of occasional statements, or whether they were exaggerated/false. I cannot start to address them or rebuild trust until I know whether I need to rebuild that trust with you or with the board.

- I am still really struggling with your assertion that “if I had trusted you, we would have a giant digital Super and all the staff on through January.”
- I also really struggle with the assertion that me being “unprofessional” and “abrasive” was “one of the reasons we accelerated you off the board.”
- I am also **deeply upset** by your statement that because of a comment I made during the PR post-mort, Jack felt he could not trust me and responded by removing me from hotel negotiations. It’s so astonishingly unfair that I question whether it’s actually true. If it is true, you should have brought this up to the rest of the board immediately, as it should be a giant concern if the president of the board cut one of your most valuable and experienced employees out of a conversation that was central to their professional duties due to an unrelated, offhand comment about seeking greater diversity. If it’s not true, then it undermines my trust in you as our main liaison to the board.

I also felt that some of the concerns you raised were not in line with MAGFest’s working culture or core values--that they might be valid in another organization, but not in this one. I’m concerned about this because I don’t believe you were brought in to change

some of the core tenets of how we operate. I genuinely believe that in these cases, you must be the one to adapt to fit us and not the other way around.

- The whole use of the word/concept of insubordination concerns me. I truly believe that disagreement is NOT a mark of disrespect. This is not purely a semantic concern but also a cultural concern. MAGFest is a very horizontal organization; it is a start-up environment and a small team. It NEEDS to be ok for us to disagree with each other, even in meetings, even in front of the board, even publicly. This isn't just true for me and the other employees, it's also true for the staff. This position cannot succeed

Some stuff felt more appropriate for a performance review. I felt it was not relevant to our working relationship and therefore was just used as ammunition against me, rather than a tool to rebuild our trust. This underscored my own point that you often react to perceived criticism with anger, personal attacks, and/or deflection.

- In particular, I felt it was distracting and unnecessary to bring up the PR response as an example of me being unprofessional. (You stated that "my" response in the PR crisis was not approved by the board, and that I singled myself out as representing the organization without approval from the actual representatives of the organization.)